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Edited by Peter Hemingson

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BACKBEAT Jazz

(Continued from page 110)

John Kaizan Neptune & Mu'ryo: Shogun
Teiichi Hori & Shoichi Ono, producers. Inner City IC 6078
Shankar: Who's to Know
Shankar & Manfred Eicher, producers. ECM 1-1195

The music on these recordings represents only two of the many remarkable ways in which the influence of American jazz is felt around the world. In the case of "Shogun," the influence is direct: Japanese musicians orchestrating and performing music that is virtually indistinguishable from American jazz. In the case of "Who's to Know," the influence is more subtle. Shankar is an Indian violinist (he is not related to Ravi Shankar) whose music is carefully within the boundaries of Indian classical tradition.

"Shogun," despite its title, bears only an inspirational relationship to the popular novel-cum-television film. To confuse things even more, the compositions are the work of John Kaizan Neptune, an American who has lived in Japan and earned advanced proficiency degrees in the Tozan school of shakuhachi flute playing. The jazz elements are provided by an all-Japanese band playing arrangements by Takao Naoi.

The juxtaposition of Neptune's wonderfully atmospheric, pentatonic flute melodies with Naoi's driving, Gerald Wilson-influenced charts is, to say the least, schizophrenic. Other Japanese traditional instruments—the koto, the o-daiko drum, and the eerie-sounding sho—make appearances here and there, notably in *Samurai, Shogun*, and *Five Windows*. But, in the long run, it is the bombastic Naoi charts that dominate the recording.

That the Japanese elements in a recording like this are provided by an American scholar, while the American jazz elements are handled by native Japanese, tells as much as we need to know about the extraordinary pervasiveness of jazz throughout the globe. It also reminds us, sadly, of how willing some Japanese artists are to abandon their own traditions in favor of the more topical creative formats of the West.

This is not the case with Shankar's work, which starts with the ragas and talas of Indian classical music and only discreetly inserts phrases, runs, and, most noticeably, the intensity of Western jazz/rock. He plays a newly-invented instrument, which he calls a double-violin, consisting of two electronically amplified five-stringed violin fingerboards